

# THE Musical Times

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"Bessy Bell" and a Welsh Air

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M. Alexandre Guilmant, the eminent French organist, gave the first of his annual Organ Concerts of the season at the Paris Trocadéro on the 13th ult., before a numerous audience. The artist played, amongst other solo pieces, a Toccata and Fugue by Sebastian Bach and a Concerto by Handel, composers whose instrumental works would, but for him, be comparatively unknown to French audiences. M. Guilmant had the co-operation of a small but efficient orchestra, conducted by M. Gabriel Marie.

Tschaikowski is reported to be busily engaged upon a new operatic work, "King René's Daughter," founded upon Henrik Hertz's drama of the same title.

The prize for the best string quartet offered last year by the St. Petersburg Society for the Cultivation of Chamber Music has been awarded to Herr M. Weber, of Wiesbaden, and the second to M. Sokolow, of St. Petersburg. The jury consisted of MM. Tschaikowski, Rymnski-Korsakow, Napravnik, and La Roche.

A somewhat tardy celebration of the Rossini Centenary took place on the 8th ult., at the La Scala Theatre of Milan, the occasion being, however, rendered doubly memorable by the presence of Giuseppe Verdi, who, moreover, conducted a portion of the performance. The latter included the Overtures to "La Cambiale di Matrimonio" (Rossini's first operatic work) and "Guillaume Tell," the "Stabat Mater," and the prayer from "Mosè," the latter conducted by Verdi. On account partly of the presence of the idolized living one, the homage paid to the dead master took the form of enthusiastic demonstrations altogether beyond description on the part of the numerous audience. There was a choir of some 450 voices and an orchestra numbering 150 performers.

At the Teatro Pagliano, of Florence, a new opera, "Tilda," the libretto by Signor Zanardini, the music by the young Maestro Cilea, was first produced last month and met with a highly successful reception.

A new four-act opera, entitled "Cimbelino," the libretto founded upon Shakespeare's play and written by Signor Golisciani, the music by M. Van Westerhout, a Naples musician with Wagnerian leanings, was brought out last month at the Teatro Argentina, of Rome, and was well received, although the press organs are greatly divided in their estimate of the merits of the new work.

Fifty-five national bands of Italy are to take part in a contest to be held at Genoa in connection with the forthcoming celebration of the Christopher Columbus Centenary.

Signor Arrigo Boito, the composer of "Mefistofele," has been appointed, by the Italian Government, Inspector-General of the Conservatorios and other recognised music-teaching institutions of the kingdom, with a view to his reporting periodically upon the status of the technical instruction carried on at these establishments.

A commemorative tablet is to be attached, by order of the Municipal Council of Venice, to the old Theatre of San Mose in that town, where, at the age of eighteen, Rossini made his *début* as an operatic composer with "La Cambiale di Matrimonio."

A most successful first performance took place last month, at Turin, of a new operetta entitled "Studenti Parigini," by the Maestro Settimo Sarroto.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE "VICAR OF BRAY."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—My letters in your December and January numbers seem to have elicited an amount of information that may be said to have solved the question raised in them. Mr. Kidson's learned letter in your February issue definitely settles these statements:—

(1.) That the air to the "Vicar of Bray" that I quoted from my MS. book in December was copied in all likelihood from a broadside, *circa* 1735-1740, and was printed before this by Walsh in his "Musical Miscellany" (1734) to the words of the "Vicar of Bray."

(2.) That this air is an old Scotch air known as "Bessy Bell," to be found at least as early as Thomson's "Orpheus Caledonius" (1725).

The present tune to the "Vicar of Bray" does not, so far as I know, appear in combination with the words before the *Vocal Magazine* (1778). Unless someone can find an earlier instance, it seems to me that my original conjecture that the tune given in your December Number was the original tune to the "Vicar of Bray" has been established.—

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN H. MEE.

Kettel Hall, Oxford.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—I lately came across the following entry in Pepys's Diary, which I think may probably refer to an early version of the "Vicar of Bray":—

"June 16 [1668]. . . Come to Newbury, and there dined; and musick; a song of the old courtier of Queene Elizabeth's, and how he was changed upon the coming in of the King, did please me mightily, and I did cause W. Hewer to write it out." It is perhaps extravagant to suggest that Hewer's transcription may be amongst the MSS. in the Pepysian Library (musical department?), but I think the possibility warrants a search therein.—Yours truly,

ARTHUR E. GRIMSHAW.

Leeds.

### "BESSY BELL" AND A WELSH AIR.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—The air which "F. R. C." has sent, copied from the modern Collection of Welsh Songs, has perhaps some slight degree of resemblance to the air "Bessy Bell," but it bears a still greater to the popular tune now well known by its adaptation to Burns's song "The Deil's awa' wi' the Exciseman." In its original form this melody is first seen in Playford's "Dancing Master" in all the many editions from 1650-1 to 1716. In this it is called "The Hemp Dresser," with the additional titles, "The London Gentlewoman," or "The London Maid." The air is the same in all the editions, this following being copied from the third edition, 1665, and being nearly note for note as in the sixteenth, 1716—

"The London Gentlewoman; or, The Hemp Dresser." From the "Dancing Master," 1665.

No. 1.



After the first editions of the "Dancing Master," Tom D'Urfey wrote a song to a better version of the air, and published it in "A Third Collection of New Songs, never printed before. The words by Mr. D'Urfey." London, folio, 1685. The song he wrote is at page 7, and is called "The Winchester Christening, the Sequel to the Winchester Wedding, a new Song set to the tune of a pretty country dance called The Hemp Dresser."

"The Winchester Christening" &c., from D'Urfey's third book, 1685.

No. 2.



The song is a poor parody of the delightful original by Sir John Suckling, "I'll tell thee, Dick, where I have been." D'Urfey's song commences—

The sun had loosed his weary team  
And turned his steeds a-grazing, &c.

When "Wit and Mirth" was published in 1698, D'Urfey included in it the song and air; it is also found upon contemporary musical broadsides, and is in other early collections. It was used, as "Bessy Bell" was, in the "Beggar's Opera" (1728), set to the song "The first time at the looking glass," and after this time in many ballad operas and collections innumerable. Under the title "When Sol had loosed" it was published in Oswald's "Caledonian Pocket Companion," 8vo, *cir.* 1750-60. This, no doubt, led to its being considered a Scotch tune, and when Burns's song was put to it in the fourth volume of Johnson's "Scots Museum" (1792) its Scottish claim got a firmer hold.

Chappell gives a rather meagre account of the air, and strangely enough does not point out the poorness and the imperfect character of the tune as it appears in his "Dancing Master" both early and late, and the improvement in D'Urfey's setting, which is the one he himself mostly adheres to.

The Welsh setting published in the Songs of Wales has most probably been copied from one of Edward Jones's Welsh collections, published at the end of the last century and beginning of this. Both Jones and Parry included in their Gatherings airs which had been published years before as English or other airs, and this without any mention of the circumstance and evidence of their Welsh nationality. Such, among others, are "Of noble race was Shenkin" and "The dawning of the day," the latter being originally "Windsor Terrace."—Yours truly,

128, Burley Road, Leeds.

FRANK KIDSON.

*Correction.*—In the February Number of THE MUSICAL TIMES, by a slip of the pen, I said that the song "Vicar of Bray" was in Vol. II. of the "Merry Musician." I should have written Vol. IV.

## BROKEN MUSIC.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—Bacon's "Sylva Sylvarum" (page 72, 1628 Edition) says:—

"All *Concords* and *Discords* of *Musicke*, are, (no doubt) *Sympathies*, and *Antipathies* of *Sounds*. And so (likewise) in that *Musicke*, which wee call *Broken Musicke*, or *Consorte Musicke*; Some *Consorts* of *Instruments* are sweeter than others; (A Thing not sufficiently yet observed :) As the *Irish Harpe*, and *Base Viall* agree well: The *Recorder* and *Stringed Musicke* agree well: *Organs* and the *Voice* agree well: &c. But the *Virginalls* and the *Lute*; Or the *Welsh-Harpe*, and the *Irish Harpe*; Or the *Voice* and *Pipes* alone, agree not so well; But for the *Melioration* of *Musicke*, there is yet much left (in this Point of *Exquisite Consort*), to try and enquire."

It is probable that this (rather than the passage in the "Essay of Masques and Triumphs," quoted in the article by "W. H. C." in THE MUSICAL TIMES for April) is what Sir G. A. Macfarren referred to. Any way, the "Sylva Sylvarum" paragraph brings additional evidence as to the meaning of "broken music" as the phrase was used in Shakespeare's time. It is furthermore worthy of consideration whether Matthew Locke's "broken Consort" gives a perfect explanation of the phrase "broken music." The discourse of *Henry* and *Katharine* ("King Henry V.") loses nothing from the supposition that *Katharine's* speech was "broken" because it was partly English, partly French. This is quite in accordance with Sir G. A. Macfarren's explanation; but not so strictly in accordance with the Matthew Locke statement that music was broken when the number of parts was lessened.—Yours obediently,

ANDREW DEAKIN.

Soho Park, Birmingham, April 12, 1892.

[The quotation from "Sylva Sylvarum" proves that the author regarded "broken music" as synonymous with "consort music"—that is to say, concerted music for

voices or instruments. Sir G. Macfarren could not have referred to this passage when he suggested that "broken music" meant the intermixture of strings and wind. Here several of the examples cited are for concerted strings alone.—W. H. C.]

## ANCIENT AND MODERN FORMS OF HYMN-TUNES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—In reviewing Mr. Julian's "Dictionary of Hymnology" J. S. writes: "*Musical purists* also turn up from time to time who call aloud for the old English tunes to be restored to *their original shape*." Does not a previous paragraph suggest a very practical argument in favour of such restoration, at least in some cases? The paragraph I refer to is this: "All practical musicians have had some unpleasant experience of the difficulty of setting to music words . . . in such irregular rhythm," &c.

One of the commonest irregularities of rhythm is the frequent substitution of a trochee for an iambus at the beginning of an Iambic line. Unless the musical rhythm in such cases is changed from verse to verse there results a false accentuation of words, very painful to the ears of a *verbal purist*. In the old English tunes in Iambic metres each line begins and ends with a note of double length, with the result (whether intentional or not) that a false metre is hardly perceived by the ear. Not only does the obviously conventional form of the music fail to impress the idea of recurring accent upon the mind, but the extra length given to the first syllable of the trochee does really compensate for the loss of its proper position in the musical bar. Take, for instance, "St. Michael's," as printed in "Hymns Ancient and Modern" to Hymn 446, where we get such accents as "Bright shall the crown" and, much worse, "Bittér the cup," "Boundless their joy." Sing the tune as originally written, with a semibreve instead of a minim at the beginning of each line, and the words regain almost entirely their proper form.—Yours faithfully,

CHRIST. THOMPSON.

Pensax Vicarage, Tenbury, April 21, 1892.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

\*.\* Notices of concerts, and other information supplied by our friends in the country, must be forwarded as early as possible after the occurrence; otherwise they cannot be inserted. Our correspondents must specifically denote the date of each concert, for without such date no notice can be taken of the performance.

Our correspondents will oblige by writing all names as clearly as possible, as we cannot be responsible for any mistakes that may occur.

Correspondents are informed that their names and addresses must accompany all communications.

We cannot undertake to return offered contributions; the authors, therefore, will do well to retain copies.

Notice is sent to all subscribers whose payment (in advance) is exhausted. The paper will be discontinued where the Subscription is not renewed. We again remind those who are disappointed in obtaining back numbers that, although the music is always kept in stock, only a sufficient quantity of the rest of the paper is printed to supply the current sale.

ANDREW ARMOUR.—(1). There are two Masses by Ambrose Thomas, a "Requiem" and a "Messe Solennelle," the latter of which is published at 20 francs net. We know of none entitled "St. Cecilia." (2). The "St. Cecilia" Mass by Ad. Adam is not published in complete vocal score, but four of the movements may be had separately. (3). The vocal score of Schumann's Mass in C minor costs 4s. 6d.

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF COUNTRY NEWS.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for any opinions expressed in this summary, as all the notices are either collated from the local papers or supplied to us by correspondents.

AIRDRIE.—An excellent performance of J. More Smieton's dramatic Cantata *King Arthur* was given by the Choral Union on March 30, under the direction of Mr. David Johnston. The soloists were Madame Isabel George, Mr. Bantock Pierpoint, and Mr. Charles Chilley. Mr. Harvey accompanied with customary skill. The chorus was in capital form and the audience very appreciative.

ANDOVER.—An excellent rendering of Stainer's *Crucifixion* was given by a choir of about 20 voices at the Parish Church here in